Toda AW60
Kota AW55

[For population statistics on the Toda and Kota for various years from 1812-1971, see the AW50 Badaga file, 4: Hockings, Category 161, p. 12.]

1: Thurston & Rangachari E,G-4,5 (no date) 1909
AW50 Badaga AW50



**Aunvallur** (possessors of cattle).—A fanciful name for Idaiyans. 000

**Avaru.**—A synonym of Agaru.

**Aviri** (*Indigofera tinctoria*).—An exogamous sept of Padma Sālēs, who use indigo in the manufacture of coloured cloth fabrics.

**Avisa** (*Sesbania grandiflora*).—A gōtra of Mēdara.

**Āvu** (snake).—An exogamous sept of Kuruba.

**Āvula** (cow).—An exogamous sept of Balija, Bōya, Golla, Kāpu, Korava, Mutrācha, and Yerukala.

**Āyar** (cow-herd).—A synonym or sub-division of Idaiyan and Kōlayān.

**Ayōdhya** (Oudh).—A sub-division of Kāpus, who say that they originally lived in Oudh.

**Āzhāti.**—Recorded, in the Travancore Census Report, 1901, as a synonym of Pishārati.

**Badaga.**—As the Todas are the pastoral, and the Kotas the artisan tribe of the Nīlgiris, so the agricultural element on these hills is represented by the Badagas (or, as they are sometimes called, Burghers). Their number was returned, at the census, 1901, as 34,178 against 1,267 Kotas, and 807 Todas. Though the primary occupation of the Badagas is agriculture, there are among their community, schoolmasters, clerks, public works contractors, bricklayers, painters, carpenters, sawyers, tailors, gardeners, forest guards, barbers, washermen, and scavengers. Many work on tea and coffee estates, and gangs of Badagas can always be seen breaking stones on, and repairing the hill roads. Others are, at the present day, earning good wages in the Cordite Factory near Wellington. Some of the more prosperous 101 161 463

2; Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



over who is a Badaga and who is not.

The coherence of Badaga society was already a *fait accompli* by 1800, and we know of scarcely any villages founded much after that date. In effect their colonization of the Nilgiris and the consolidation of various refugee groups into a unity were events of what we must academically call prehistory. From the Badagas' point of view, however, the advent of a few foreign literati did not nudge their community from the darkness of prehistory into the gloomy light of historicity. Until today nobody, Badaga or otherwise, has published a history of the community: are they therefore still prehistoric?

Be that as it may, their past is of extreme importance to them, and is still vividly recalled in an oral history of legends that are taken for fact and in most cases probably *are* based on actual events. Badaga legends are highly consistent from one part of the district to another and are sufficiently precise about the more insignificant details to convince me that, like the Maori genealogists of old, Badagas have long maintained a fairly accurate interest in their past and in teaching the young about it. Some of these unwritten legends take the form of epic ballads that are sung throughout the night while waiting for someone to die and in other situations where time has to be killed. This should not deceive us into considering the legends mere entertainment: it is true that they are delightfully entertaining to Badagas, but legends are also crucial to their convictions about how the social system should operate. It is these highly credible tales about who settled which village that explain to all the 120,000 Badagas the regulations governing village exogamy and other aspects of the relation between a kinship system, a pattern of settlement and a social hierarchy.

Instead of relegating Badaga legend to the 'folklore' pigeon-hole in the hope that a content analysis will later be made of it, I propose to examine briefly what the legends do and do not cover in Badaga prehistory. Most of them are tales of supposed events, often mysterious, often tragic, events in the lives of personages who lived on the Nilgiri Hills. Stories of love and magic belong to this group. A second group are the political tales, legends of chieftains and East India Company officials who came to the hills for conquest, plunder or sport. A third group are the local legends of Badaga colonization. These three groups deal with varying aspects of Badaga origins. The tales of personal exploits, often amorous in

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

2

# *Place-Names and Cultural Ecology*

## A NEW SYSTEM OF THERAPY

167 The Badagas thus came to the Nilgiri Plateau as refugees and
175 settled there on land that in part they cleared from virgin tropical montane forest and that was in part granted them by a council of men from the indigenous Toda, Kota and Kurumba tribes, people who had already occupied a thin scattering of hamlets on the hills for perhaps a millennium.

175 The Badagas can thus be seen, at least in the first three centuries
●161 of their occupation, as frontiersmen whose population and number of settlements were slowly increasing over the decades. In 1603 there were only about 500 Badagas living in three villages (Finicio, 1603, 723). By the first British census, in 1812, they numbered 2207 people. But at this time, to judge by the same rough census (which perhaps excluded children), they had already become the numerically dominant community in the area: the Todas numbered only 179 (compared with possibly 1000 in 1603), and the Kotas 130; the Kurumbas and Irulas, two tribes living on the lower Nilgiri slopes, were not counted at all, though they were certainly there.
175 Furthermore, during this same period of two centuries the Badaga
361 settlement pattern became such a dispersed one that their hamlets increased in number from three to over 350. This expansion was in part the effect of fertile land being available and in part the result of an effective indigenous therapeutic system.

175 By the time of the first British visits, the Badagas had clearly

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



175 to spit in the proper place.' With this attitude prevalent, the spread
[514] of various viruses and of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* has been greatly curtailed. The regular washing of the body and shaving of
[515] pubic hair have also contributed to health by restricting the
302 incidence of bodily fungi and lice-borne diseases.

The ecological significance of these various beliefs and practices
175 is that as the Nilgiri population increased in the nineteenth century and some village streams began to be polluted by this new
• 161 pressure, the Badagas managed to avoid some contamination by
[318] switching from drinking stream water and fresh milk to tea, coffee and sometimes alcohol, all of which would be relatively free of bacterial organisms. The new balance with the environment that this change brought about was certainly one factor in the remarkable increase in the Badaga population since the advent of the British (Appendix 2).

175 At the same time that this change in drinking habits was
177 occurring their eating habits were undergoing an equally radical
262 transformation. In part this was due to the several dozen types of fruit, grain and vegetable introduced from Europe by British settlers and adopted by most Badagas. The variety of their diet was thus greatly increased.

## VILLAGE NAMES

121 A study of the present Badaga hamlet names yields a body of insights about the early settlements formed during the two and a half centuries preceding the first British report (Keys, 1812).

Perhaps a somewhat lyrical description of the Nilgiri Plateau may at this point aid the reader's understanding of what is to follow:

133 The plateau is a true tableland, its average height being very uniform. But there is not a square mile of level ground in the whole of it, its surface being broken by endless undulations which in places swell into considerable and distinct ranges. It rises most abruptly from the plains below it; and on the west, above the Ouchterlony Valley and southwards, its sides are often sheer, bare walls, hundreds of feet in height and too steep even for trees to obtain a footing on them. Elsewhere dense forest covers almost the whole of its slopes . . .

It is first of all divided east and west into two fairly equal but

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AM50 Badaga AM50



are available for the total area under crop by Badagas.[14] In the case of the administrative 'village' of Sholur nevertheless good data (McIver & Stokes, 1883; Benson, 1884; Arputhanathan, 1953, 43; Subrahmanyam, 1962, 3-4) allow a realistic comparison with the recent situation (see Table 1). This 'village' (actually a commune) may be considered typical of Badaga settlements and has hardly changed its official boundaries since the Land Settlement of 1884.[15]

Table 1. *Sholur (So:lu:ru) 'Village': eighty years of agricultural change*

| | |
|---|---|
| Total 'village' area, 1884 | 9113 hectares |
| Total 'village' area, 1961 | 9111 ha. |
| Registered *patta* lands, 1884 | 913 ha., all held by Badagas |
| Registered *patta* lands, 1962 | 1619 ha., nearly all held by Badagas |
| Number of *pattas*, 1884 | 49 single registrations,<br>63 joint ones (i.e., total of 112 *pattas*) |
| Number of *pattas*, 1962 | 372 in total |
| Population, 1881 | 1772, all communities, in 384 houses |
| Population, 1961 | 8518, all communities, in 930 houses |
| Estimate of cropped area, 1880-1881 | 749 ha. |
| Estimate of cropped area, 1962 | 607 ha. |

From Table 1 evidence of several important shifts emerges:

A. In eighty years the population increased fivefold.

B. In eighty years the size of households doubled, from an average of 4.61 to an average of 9.15.[16]

C. In eighty years the number of registered land holdings *(pattas)* more than tripled.

D. In eighty years the area of *patta* land doubled through release of government-held reserves (but was not all cropped).

E. Fragmentation of holdings has thus been taking place.

F. The estimate of the total cultivated area in 1962 was a little below that for 1880-1881.

G. Average cultivated area has thus dropped from 0.42 ha. per capita in 1881 to 0.07 ha. per capita around 1961; in other words, only one-sixth as much cropped land is being used as there was in 1881 for each person.

We may conclude from the recent situation at Sholur (So:lu:ru)

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



175 Treaty of Seringapatam in 1799, they were slow to appreciate their prize. It was only after twenty years and several preliminary explorations that a British official, John Sullivan, had serious thoughts of settling on the plateau. In this he was prompted by his own romantic inclinations after hearing the reports of others and making a tour of the area himself; but he was also invited to come there by the Badagas, as they wanted someone to survey their lands and determine if they were being assessed for too much revenue.[1]

As soon as Sullivan had taken up residence in what later became Kotagiri he began experimenting with several European crops, also giving seeds to some interested Badagas. Even after his arrival, while the new township of Ootacamund was becoming established, the British continued for a decade to collect the land revenue in the plains. They had adopted a policy of fixing grain prices, which gave some encouragement to the Badagas who sold their grain surplus in the lowland towns; and this indirectly fostered the practice of storing credit gained there by selling the food-grains for coinage.

After 1823 roads were developed and a market established at Ootacamund. Thereafter the Badaga economy became monetized, with Ootacamund as the new centre for their trade. By 1840 they were making most of their bazaar purchases with coinage.

●(161) The first estimate of the Badaga population (in 1812) was only 2207, and by 1821—perhaps a better census—it had reached 3778. The British population increased rapidly too, offering Badagas who lived near the towns an opportunity to labour for a cash wage or to grow European vegetables for the market that was suddenly on their doorstep. While their tradition of intensive farming in small fields was well suited to the new crops, and the Nilgiri climate by chance blessed their endeavours, learning to compete in a labour market was another matter: it was only because some feared the government might otherwise increase the land tax out of revenge that Badagas let themselves be persuaded to work for Europeans.

175 M The early British influences on Badaga culture were thus the introduction of a local market, a cash economy and a demand for labour and vegetables. But this was enough to trigger a rise in the fortunes of the community and also to prompt a remarkable increase in the size of the Badaga population. Another significant British novelty was education. Within a year of Sullivan's arrival a

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



175 177 school had been opened in Devanadu; yet it was only after 1856 that Badagas perceived some value in schooling. This value lay in Tamil literacy, which was slowly becoming the one sure passport to such coveted official positions as *karnam* and *manegar*.

177 178 During the 1860s and 1870s legislation put an end to shifting cultivation, cutting timber in the jungle and paying a light tax on undemarcated land holdings. No longer was there land available for everyone to clear and farm: those who could not pay the government land-tax became tenant small-holders, landless labourers or plantation workers. These successive blows to the customary farming practice, following hard upon the first Christian conversion (1858), fostered a half-century of mistrust of Europeans which the numerous epidemics, droughts, conversions, temple rebuildings and surveys of field ownership did nothing to dispel. Over this period land erosion became a serious problem, fields were inadequately manured and rarely terraced, much Badaga land was sold to European planters, and indebtedness became widespread. Only some villages near the towns achieved a measure of prosperity. Jakkatala, a prime case, sold much of its land to the government for the Wellington Barracks and then profitted further from contracts for gangs of labourers to build the barracks and some other public structures. By the turn of the century a few families had become very wealthy as contractors, some of them in building the railway to Ootacamund.

178 311 [161] At the start of the twentieth century the Badaga population had climbed to 34,000 (having increased fifteen-fold in the preceding century), and the density of the rural labour force had also increased appreciably through continued immigration. Alongside this growth Grigg (1880, 321) had observed: '... each year has the area of cultivation and permanent occupation been extending with the growth in numbers of the hill-tribes [Badagas], the increase of wealth among them, and the great extension of plantations.'[2]

178 241 Although tea, coffee and potato had been grown in the district for over half a century, it was only with the onset of World War I and the completion of the Nilgiri railway that Badagas shifted the emphasis in their farming from millets to potato and in the 1920s to tea as well. This made many of them cash-crop farmers, since they did not eat much potato and had to buy their food-grains in the bazaar. Their initial interest in tea cultivation was merely as a method of increasing the value of land before selling it to European planters.

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



By now the Badaga Christians were viewed as a separate caste, and the old antagonism over Christian conversion had given place to a new realism which accepted the British, tolerated their religion and sought to collaborate with them in the realms of commerce and administration. The periodic massacres of Kurumbas had also come to an end.

Land fragmentation and indebtedness continued to be problems for the twentieth-century farmer, but new techniques of commercial cultivation raised the per capita income appreciably. Chemical fertilizers and insecticides were now used, along with good seed and reputable tea cuttings. Money-lenders, middlemen and truckers all appeared on the scene to answer local needs. Most of the hillsides were terraced to permit efficient farming, and the emergence of co-operative societies from 1911 helped with this as well as with the more general problem of rural credit.

These new directions in the farm economy were fully in evidence by 1930, at which time most Badagas broke off their time-honoured exchange relationship with the Kotas, Todas and Kurumbas and began to seek the artifacts these tribesmen had made in town markets instead. The ostensible reasons for this break are several. Badagas usually mention the increasing cost of having a Kota band at their ceremonies; while Kotas mention an insulting article in a national newspaper of 1928, 'The Hindu', which implied that Kotas were descended from the unions of Todas with Badagas.[3] A glance at the population graph in Appendix 2, however, will make it clear that the over-riding reason for the break must have been the disproportionately large number of Badagas. By 1931 there were 42,500 of them, too many to be adequately supplied in the customary way by a few hundred Todas and Kotas.

The Second World War brought a further surge in the demand for potatoes to feed the European troops stationed throughout south and southeast Asia; at the same time government financing helped the growers, with the result that this new capital and the high prices potatoes were fetching greatly alleviated the former indebtedness of Badagas. After 1957 potato production fell sharply with a series of disease-ridden crops, and tea, first planted by Badagas some thirty years before, now became a popular cash-crop too. By 1970 cabbage had also become an important crop.

Modern Badagas enjoy a high standard of living, occupy comfortable tiled houses, send their sons to college, make frequent

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AN50 Badaga AN50



121 chance events or 'historical accidents'. Because the combination of all these conditions will vary from one region to another, the manner of the economic transition will also vary. We should therefore not expect a replication of the successive phases of the Badagas' development elsewhere in India, even though such people as the Coorgs may suggest a superficial parallel (see Muthanna, 1953, *passim*; Srinivas, 1965, *passim*).

121 178 The Badagas' transition to a cash economy depended in part on very favourable ecological conditions. Their land and the climate were well suited to the new crops, and for some decades it was even possible to extend the area of cultivation. A protectionist government fixed grain prices, provided roads and encouraged railway construction and even supplied Badagas with technical information and improved seeds. No external pressure was placed upon them to make the transition; yet some of the more affluent farmers living near towns took the chance with initial crops of marketable vegetables or grain to sell to the two breweries. Their decision found some reward and incentive in the profits from the local market; and with the advent of the railway and the First World War this expanded dramatically. Once some success in the market had brought these profits into the community, reinvestment and spending took a variety of forms. The Badaga economy became increasingly differentiated, there was considerable variation in wealth from one family to another, a class structure based on affluence began to emerge and most families sought to maximize their gains, even at the expense of their customary relations with the neighbouring tribes.

121 Though the details of their history are unique, there are some regularities that tie the Badaga case in with others; in particular, the modern stress on education, the desire for non-essential consumer goods, reinvestment of profits in land (Epstein, 1962, 326–328), the role of mass media in popularizing urban tastes (Rao, 1966), the replacement of traditional co-operative associations by market relations and co-operative societies, and the periodic restructuring of society through factional disputes.

## NOTES

175

1. A survey was actually made in 1820; see above, p. 166, n. 2, and Hockings 1973, 869.

161 178 511

2. So also the Sanitary Commissioner, Dr. Cornish: 'I have no doubt the native

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



population is increasing, and that the position of the Badaga has materially improved. I notice especially the facts that they are now tiling their houses, that their women and children earn money on the tea and coffee estates, and that they buy rági and grain from the low country, and get a better market for their straw and cattle. They wear jewels of gold and silver, saved from their earnings'; quoted by Grigg, 1880, 34. This contrasts with the situation at the start of the British occupation of the hills, when the Badagas were so few in proportion to the land available that there was no need for crop rotation, as fields could be left fallow for years at a time; Mackworth, 1823, 124–126.

3. Emeneau, 1946, 265. Ranga, 1934, 4, reports that around 1930, 'In addition to this heavy expenditure upon funerals, more than three hundred Badagas cease work for more than two days and live at the expense of the relatives of the deceased or the people of the village. The expenses of a funeral incurred by all the Badagas in a hamlet come to more than Rs. 600. To add to this, their European employers lose their confidence in the ability of these people for regular service, since they cease work without giving any notice whatever . . .'; similarly Metz, 1864, 89–90.

[p. 246 is blank]

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

# APPENDIX I

## *Population of the Main Nilgiri Communities, 1961*

*Indigenous Groups*

| | |
|---|---|
| Badagas (including Christians) | 84,823[1] |
| Panias (including Christians) | 5139 |
| Irulas and Kasuvas | 3958 |
| Kurumbas | 2600 |
| Mauntadan Chettis | 1650 |
| Nayakas | 1168 |
| Kotas | 956 |
| Todas (including Christians) | 759[2] |
| Wainad Chettis | 711 |
| Uralis | 33[3] |
| Total: | 101,797 |

*Immigrant Groups*

| | |
|---|---|
| Tamil-speaking | 158,057 |
| Malayalam-speaking | 64,622 |
| Kannada-speaking | 37,690 |
| Telugu-speaking | 30,118 |
| North Indians, etc. | 17,024 |
| Total: | 307,511 |

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



## NOTES

161
162
000

1. The district total at time of census; there were then an additional 640 Badagas beyond the district boundaries, and thus the real total was 85,463. By 1971 it had become 104, 919.
2. Another six Todas, indigenous to the Nilgiris, were outside the district at time of census. By 1971 there were 930 Todas.
3. Though a few live within the district, they are not primarily a Nilgiri tribe: their national total was 1,078. In 1971 their Nilgiri total was only 46.

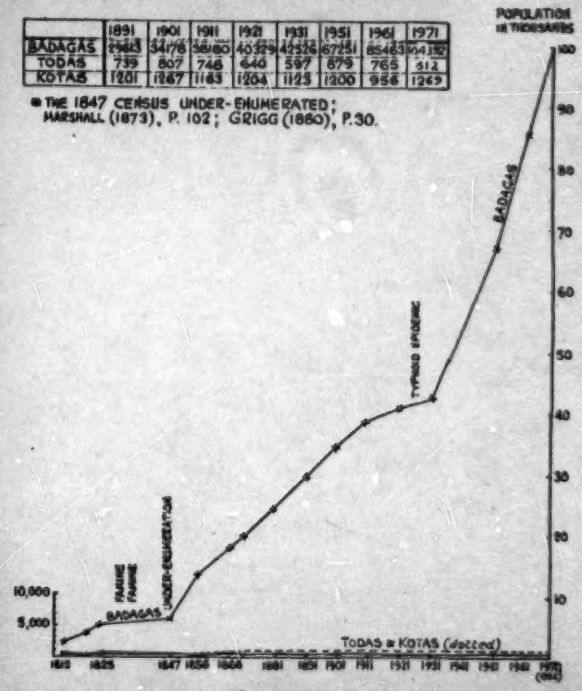
# APPENDIX 2

## *Badaga Population Growth Compared with that of Todas and Kotas* 175 161

| | 1812 | 1821 | 1825 | 1847* | 1856 | 1866 | 1871 | 1881 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BADAGAS | 2207 | 3778 | 5147 | 6569 | 13352 | 17778 | 19476 | 24398 |
| TODAS | 179 | 222 | 326 | 337 | 316 | 704 | 693 | 689 |
| KOTAS | 130 | 317 | | 307 | 484 | 802 | 1112 | 1067 |

| | 1891 | 1901 | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BADAGAS | 29613 | 34178 | 38180 | 40329 | 42526 | 67251 | 85463 | 104392 |
| TODAS | 739 | 807 | 748 | 640 | 597 | 879 | 765 | 512 |
| KOTAS | 1201 | 1267 | 1163 | 1204 | 1123 | 1200 | 956 | 1269 |

* THE 1847 CENSUS UNDER-ENUMERATED; MARSHALL (1873), P. 102; GRIGG (1880), P.30.




[p. 249] [p. 250 is blank]

3: Hockings E-5 (1962-1963) 1968
AN50 Badaga AN50



But no great change has come in salt-giving and the other important rituals of either the Badagas or the Todas. Indeed, only one general change is apparent in recent performances of the traditional ceremonies: they are done with a minimum of wasted time. Now that Badagas and even some Todas have become involved in the marketing economy, they have less time to spend idly, since time now means income. They tend to perform ritual acts with some haste, and they do not always feel concerned if a minor item in the ritual sequence is altogether omitted from a particular performance. Public opinion still favors as authentic a performance as possible, however, for the relationship between the continued performance of the rituals and the continuance of the social order is even today believed to be a real and crucial one.

Wallace's contention that rituals do not have an information function has, we hope, been qualified by this paper. The kind of information which a ritual such as salt-giving presents is information not available from any other source, whether mass media or traditional oral channels. Neither government nor gossip can reassure a community on the matter of its continued existence as a community; only the periodic re-enactment of roles and the reassertion of traditional values in the indigenous ceremonies of a culture can give Badagas, Todas, and other rural communities the security of knowing that their own particular way of life is both persistent and worthwhile.

## NOTES

1. I am indebted to the American Institute of Indian Studies for a fellowship which enabled me to do field research there in 1962-63. The present paper has been written with the help of a grant from the Chancellor's Committee on International and Comparative Studies, University of California at Los Angeles. I am also grateful to M. N. Thesingh, a Badaga Lingayat who provided much of the material, and to John Hitchcock for his helpful criticism.

2. Terracing of slopes and the fragmentation of fields through divided inheritance have resulted, since the 1930s, in fields being too small to plough.

3. Numbering 85,463 persons in the 1961 Census.

4. During the past fifty years some hamlets have included the salt-giving ceremony in their sowing festival. This is convenient because it saves some time and expense on preparations; yet the two ceremonies remain quite distinct from one another.

5. Large groups of Badagas and Kotas used to go together to the market town of Gundlupet in southern Mysore, or to Karamadai, near Coimbatore. They carried hay, honey, opium, and clarified butter with them, and bartered these for salt, crude sugar, rice, coconut, tobacco, and trinkets.

6. Initially trade in the Ootacamund bazaar was handled through barter, but by about 1840 cash had become the general medium.

7. Called *'uppu kuk'ke*, "salt basket," this is made of cane by the Todas, stands about nine inches high (including the loop handle), and is smeared inside and out with cow dung.

8. The term *'hubbe* is used for six species of Leguminosae found at varying altitudes on the Nilgiri Hills. These are (1) the hill forest indigo; (2) the New Spain senna; (3) the tick trefoil; (4) the bell pea or Chinese pagoda tree; (5) *Dumasia villosa;* and (6) mountain downy senna.

9. Otherwise known as bastard mango or honeysweet tree.

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



curable illnesses is described (Chapters 5-8). Some emphasis is placed on reproduction and sexuality (Chapters 3 and 4), because reproductive success is the ultimate test of any society's adaptation to its environment. The role of the therapist and associated specialists, and their relations with their clients, is an extremely critical factor in the maintenance of a folk medical system. Equally important to the propagation of this knowledge is the recruitment of apprentices and the relationships they develop with a therapist (Chapter 10). Care of the living body and the advent of death receive some consideration (Chapters 2 and 9). Finally, this study may be of particular interest to pharmacologists because it identifies each of the substances used in every medicament described (Chapters 4-7).

Differential interaction between Badagas and their environment — an environment which does of course include disease organisms — has over some 20 generations led to a survival of the healthier individuals, a higher fertility, and in general a steady expansion of their occupancy of the Nilgiri Massif, beginning with the founding of Tu:ne:ri village in the sixteenth century on the arrival of a few dozen refugees, and culminating in the very large and prosperous population of today (Diagram 1). The medical ethnography which follows will attempt to delineate the important factors in their adaptation.

*Introducing the Badagas*

1.2. The Badagas are a community of Hindu peasants who numbered 104,919 people in the official census of 1971. They live almost entirely on the Nilgiri Massif, which is in the westernmost corner of Tamil Nadu State, India, some 11°N from the Equator. The great majority of them are potato, cabbage and tea cultivators, but until the early years of this century they were farming such subsistence crops as barley, wheat, and several millets. The fields surround their villages and farms. They rarely irrigate, but rely instead on the two regular monsoons. Some people also keep herds of buffalo and cattle for milk and other dairy products, but not for meat.

Their long rows of brick houses lie along the leeward slopes of the hills, and are thus protected from the worst of the rains. In every village there are also temples or shrines to various Hindu gods. Badagas are nearly all Hindus of Saivite persuasion; two small but significant minorities are the Lingayats and the Christians.

of a sociologist, is that—unlike most communities on the subcontinent—the Badagas can be categorized neither as tribe nor as caste. To be precise, they are refugees drawn from several castes in southern Mysore centuries ago, who then consolidated themselves into a community on the Nilgiri Massif and to some extent may have then emulated the social organization of the neighbouring Toda tribe (Hockings 1979a).

The very name *Badaga* means "northerner" in their language, and was clearly applied to them only after they had fled from the plains immediately to the north of the Nilgiris. The reason for this flight is made quite clear in their legends: in A.D. 1565 the Vijayanagar Empire was destroyed by Muslims invading from the north. The ancestral Badagas, fearing for the safety of their womenfolk, fled to the Nilgiris and adopted a tribal type of dress for both sexes. In 1603 a certain Father Finicio, the first European visitor, encountered them on this plateau. He described them (in Portuguese) as as Badegas, and gave the impression that they then numbered 500 to 1,000 people and inhabited no more than three villages (Finicio 1603). Already they had quite a varied mixed-farming economy. The most remarkable accomplishment of the Badagas has been the consummate success with which the community has adapted to and multiplied in surroundings that were initially wild and strange for them, and which lay at an elevation 3,000 to 5,000 feet higher than did their ancestral villages on the Mysore Plain. Their agricultural success has been partly due to their adoption of foreign techniques. Typically European crops are commonly grown today on terraces made with the help of machines. The fields are nourished with artificial fertilizers and the harvest is transported in lorries. These improved techniques have led to a better standard of living and a tendency for fathers to provide their sons with the education that they missed themselves. In the four main towns of the Massif there is now a sizeable Badaga middle class, and many of the men are doctors, lawyers, teachers, or government officials. Although still largely a rural people, speaking a distinct but unwritten Dravidian language, Badagas now have an unusually high rate of literacy in both Tamil and English.

*Previous Studies*

1.3. It is possible to show in considerable detail how the Badaga

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



one aspect of their presumed "familiarity with learning," if we may call it that, they gained a reputation as exorcists and curers. Today some among the couple of thousand Kaṇakkas still practise these crafts, although they no longer hold a monopoly among the Badagas. (My chief medical informant, K. Sithamma, was born in a Kaṇakka family in 1891.)

1.6. During the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries the Badaga community increased from a reported three villages in 1603 to nearly 370 villages a century ago. This expansion, marking the second phase, encompassed some developments of importance to the history of Badaga therapy. The community was faced with the problem of adapting to a new geographic and social environment, and clearly succeeded in doing so. We may presume that natural selection helped the population build up a genetic resistance to whatever montane illnesses had not previously affected the people when they were living in Mysore; and that some lowland disease organisms were no longer able to survive at the new elevation, either because it was too high and cold for their animal hosts, or else because the hosts among the scattered and tiny human population died off without transferring these organisms to new hosts, or more probably because when the density of population was very low infection by particular diseases summoned forth antibodies or other disease-resistant aptitudes, which protected their descendants from any further infection by those diseases. As the settlements expanded the increasing numbers of people permitted greater transference of disease organisms and called for greater amounts of health care; but at the same time these settlements, located in most parts of the Nilgiri Massif within a zone that lay between 4000 and 7300 feet of elevation, gave people opportunities to select the more healthy residential sites, to explore the micro-environmental differences in the area, and most importantly to discover medicinal uses for dozens of new species of plants that were in many instances confined to the Massif (see Trilingual Index). We may presume that the pharmacological uses of local plants were discovered by Badaga women who worked as goatherds and men working as cowherds, by closely observing the feeding habits of their animals. Geza Roheim has made a similar observation on the control that Australian Aboriginal women have over the medicinal use of plants which they are responsible for gathering. While it is true that Badagas did not keep

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



after a few hours. This seemingly trivial belief had a hygienic importance, for it meant that fresh milk would be used quickly and not kept, lest the tabu about boiling be violated. If milk were allowed to "boil up" (i.e., curdle) *of its own accord*, this was taken as an omen of imminent danger or death for the household, and thus a very serious matter indeed.

The effect upon Badaga health of the changes in drinking habits outlined above was reinforced by other cultural practices, specifically in regard to buffalo dung and spitting. Various maps of Badaga villages made in the first half of the nineteenth century show that several stone kraals were located just outside each village. This means that the fecal matter of buffalo herds was confined to a certain place; (I have myself seen dung over a foot deep in some kraals). Unsavoury though these places must have been, they ensured that the dung was not spread throughout the habitation area of each village, and this substantially reduced "the chance of transference of enzootic and epizootic diseases to man" (Alland 1970: 56). As the value of farmland for tea and potato cultivation grew, especially during the present century, the Badaga population increased dramatically but the size of the cattle herds dwindled. The present-day situation is therefore that Badaga population density is vastly higher than it was, but the risks of cattle-borne infection are proportionately much less because the lack of grazing has forced them to make heavy reductions in the size of their herds and abandon many of the kraals.

As we shall see below (2.11), indiscriminate spitting was not allowed in and near the home or temple. Spittoons were used inside the house; and a proverb stressed that, "If you ask for an obligation it is essential to see the right people: it is essential to spit in the proper place." With this attitude prevalent, the spread of various viruses and of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* has been greatly curtailed. The regular washing of the body and shaving of pubic hair described below (2.9, 2.13) have also contributed to health by restricting the incidence of bodily fungi and lice-borne diseases (Alland 1970: 58). In nearly all villages the houses are built in parallel lines with solid stone or brick walls partitioning each house from its neighbours. In Ke:ti, a typical village in this respect, it was found that on the average each row of houses was separated from those in front and behind it by a distance of 10 meters, which was mostly the span of the courtyards. This relative lack of crowding of living space has

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 13]

•161

| 1812 | 1821 | 1825 | 1847 | 1856 | 1866 | 1871 | 1881 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2207 | 3778 | 5147 | 6568 | 13,352 | 17,778 | 19,476 | 20,398 | B. |
| 179 | 222 | 326 | 337 | 316 | 704 | 650 | 689 | T. |
| 130 | 317 | | 307 | 484 | 902 | 1112 | 1067 | K. |

| 1891 | 1901 | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29,613 | 34,178 | 38,190 | 40,329 | 42,526 | 67,251 | 85,465 | 104,392 | B. |
| 739 | 807 | 748 | 640 | 597 | 879 | 765 | 812 | T. |
| 1201 | 1267 | 1163 | 1204 | 1123 | 1200 | 958 | 1269 | K. |

The 1847 census under-enumerated; Marshall (1873), 102; Grigg(1880), 30

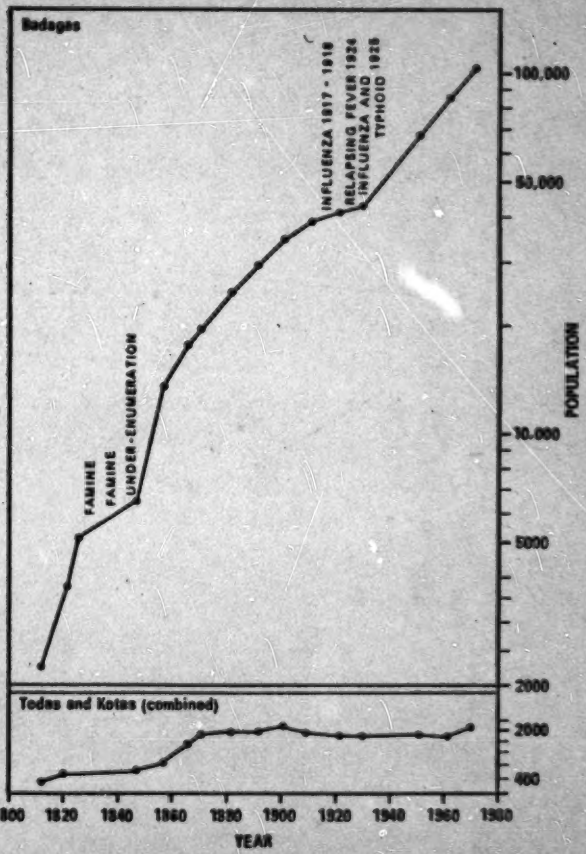



**Diagram 1 : Bagada population growth compared with that of Todas and Kotas**

[D.12]

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



also contributed to a reduction in the spread of viruses, particularly as the cattle are generally kept away from these courtyards fronting the houses.

The ecological significance of these various beliefs and practices is that as the Nilgiri population increased in the nineteenth century and some village streams began to be polluted by this new pressure, the Badagas managed to avoid some contamination by switching from drinking stream water and fresh milk to tea, coffee and sometimes alcohol, all of which would be relatively free of bacterial organisms. The new balance with the environment that this change brought about was certainly one factor in the remarkable increase in the Badaga population ever since the advent of the British (Diagram 1).

At the same time that this change in drinking habits was occurring their eating habits were undergoing an equally radical transformation. In part this was due to the several dozen types of fruit, grain and vegetable introduced from Europe by British settlers and adopted by most Badagas (2.1, Table 2; Hockings 1973: 867). The variety of their diet was thus greatly improved. Also the earlier habit of eating a midday meal, often in open air (Harkness 1832: 111), tended to cease as more and more Badaga adults began working for an hourly or daily wage on the plantations and construction projects initiated by the British, and as increasing numbers of children spent the day in school. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it thus became usual for Badagas to consume only two meals a day, generally in their own homes, one at sunrise and the other in the evening. The importance of this practice from a hygienic viewpoint was that, because flies are normally active only during daytime, "eating at night or in the early morning may protect food from fly-borne contamination" (Alland 1970: 59). Any change of diet or of custom that tended to reduce the human intake of bacterial organisms was reflected in the greatly increased life expectancy during the past century and a half.

1.8. By the later nineteenth and the twentieth centuries successful exploration of the botanical realm and this steadily increasing Badaga population had, through a process of interaction and by individual experiments, observations of animal browsing, or other acts of discovery about which we can know nothing, developed the third phase in their medical history — the full-fledged therapeutic system described in this book. As an increasingly heavy work-load was

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



As an increasingly heavy work-load was placed on the therapists more women entered the craft; and more reliance was placed on Western medicine too. Today the scientific medicine of the public health department, and of government and mission hospitals, is making serious assaults on the faith that Badagas formerly had in their own herbal therapy, and is helping the population to expand at what must be considered an alarming rate (Diagram 1). The traditional therapy was adaptive, indeed crucial, for ancient Badagas trying to gain a foothold in a strange environ-

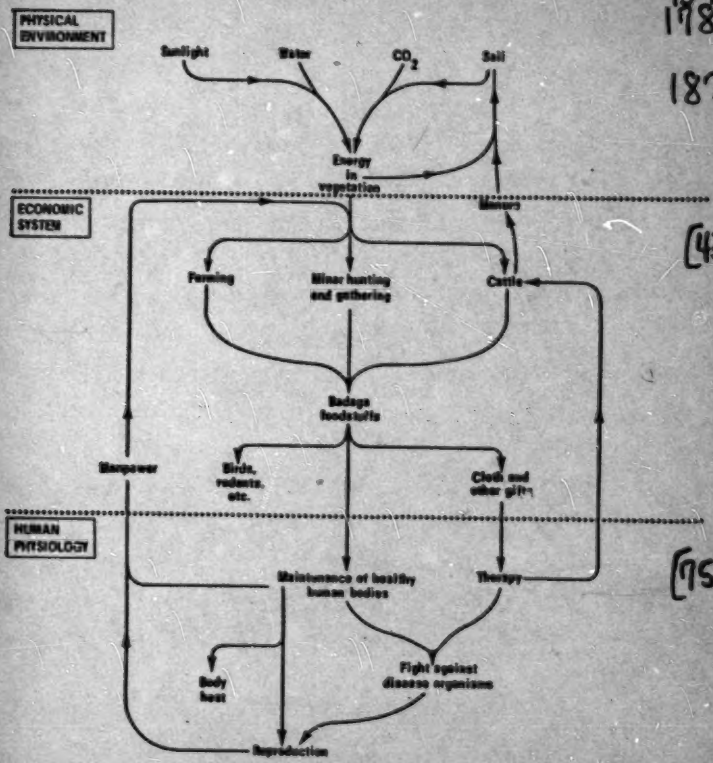



**Diagram 2 : A simple model for energy flow in the Badaga ecological system**

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50



*Fertility and Infertility*

3.17. A basic problem of public health administration—to control the abundant fertility of Indian and other Asian populations—has never been taken for a problem by the Badaga community. Even though their population has increased from 2,207 in 1812 to 104,392 in 1971 their village leaders are only now beginning to perceive that such a staggering increase (4,730 per cent in 160 years) has to be curtailed. Sons were of course valued in a farming community in a frontier-like situation, and long after swidden agriculture had ceased and the amount of farmland stabilized people still thought in terms of having a number of sons for security. This entailed on the average having the same number of daughters. ("Even though you repeatedly tell her, she is only delivering girls," a proverb bemoans.) And as standards of public hygiene slowly increased so too did the excess of births over deaths. In various prayers Badagas still ask: "May the house be filled with children!" In contrast, however, one proverb acknowledges that, "The mother who has given birth to ten children [is almost like someone] dead from having fallen in the lake." Another traditional proverb counsels: "Rather than deliver ten pigs [i.e., unscrupulous children], deliver one [good child] Nandi." In the 600 households of my sample the average nuclear family had 3.7 children.

For Badagas then, the more important problem is infertility. Several lady therapists have built their reputations on their abilities to cure or at least to predict a woman's barrenness. In some marriages, as we have seen, the apparent infertility is an effect, in the Badaga's view, of the couple thinking about divorce and hence not satisfying each other through intercourse. "Treatment" for infertility will be discussed in more detail below (6.62).

The commonest solution for an infertile marriage is for the woman to bring her younger sister into the home as a second wife. Should the latter prove infertile too their natal family is considered accursed: the thought that the problem might lie with the husband does not arise. If the barren wife does not supply a substitute she is usually sent home to her parents. Her fate then, if she is lucky, will be to marry a widower who needs a woman's labour in the house but who already has his children (Jagor 1876: 200). Nowadays childless couples tend to follow the South Indian practice of visiting distant temples on pilgrimage, and promising to give the gods something when they have been blessed with a son.

their own Dravidian language, and the Irulas and Kurumbas speak what are recognizable as dialects of Tamil.

From the year 1820 the British began to settle on the plateau (Ward 1821: lxii), bringing with them a motley train of Tamilian, Mysorean, Malabari and other dependents, including a few half-breeds. With this contact much of Southern India began to learn about the strange people, hardly Hindus, who inhabited these hills. Immigrants began to find laboring jobs in the tea and coffee plantations that were started there from the 1830's onward; and in the process of taking up this new occupation they brought the Nilgiri tribes into closer contact with the traditions and practices of South Indian village Hinduism. Today the plantations are the major source of the District income, and attract an ever-increasing number of migrant laborers from various parts of Southern India.

In the 1951 Census the most populous communities in the District, distinguished on a language basis, were the following:

**Indigenous Plateau Groups:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Badagas | 67,251 |
| Irulas, Kurumbas, etc. | 1,786 |
| Todas (including Christian Todas) | 879 |
| Total: | 69,916 |

**Immigrant Groups:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Tamilians | 119,045 |
| Malayalis | 41,461 |
| Kanarese | 40,341 |
| Telugus | 26,469 |
| Total: | 227,216 |

(Source -- Arputhanathan 1953: 60)

For some unexplained reason the 1300-odd Kotas are not listed at all; presumably they were included in the Badaga total (since they probably spoke Badagu to the census-takers).

In 1951 the total population of the District numbered 311,729; and by 1961 it had risen to 409,308 -- a massive increase of 32% in a decade, attributable to the high rate of local immigration as well as to the increase of births over deaths.

In summary, therefore, while the Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas and Irulas are all tiny communities when compared with the numbers of Badagas, the Badagas in turn are now greatly outnumbered by settlers who have recently arrived from all parts of the Southern Indian plains.

## The Badagas

Until the recent influx of these laborers, the Badagas were the preponderant community in the Nilgiris. Today they number a little under 100,000, and occupy nearly 400 hamlets dotted across the District.

The word Badaga (more correctly Baduga) means "Northerner" in their dialect of the Kannada language, and was presumably first used as a name for them when they became an immigrant community among the tribal groups already established in the Nilgiri Hills. Their origin is clearly traceable to the plains of Southern Mysore, which lie just to the north of the Nilgiris. Badaga traditions indicate that they arrived as small parties of refugees over a period of several hundred years. Because some of the earliest of these settlers were of the Lingayat faith when they arrived it is only reasonable to suppose that they left Mysore after the founding of the Lingayat sect ca. 1160 A.D. That there were a few Badaga villages in the hills by the year 1602 is known from the account of the Nilgiris sent to his superior by Father Fenicio (Fenicio 1603). But as many Badagas still speak about their ancestors having fled from the terrors of Tippu Sultan's reign in Mysore (1786-1799), there is also good ground for supposing that the last of the Badaga migrants did not reach the Nilgiris until the end of the 18th Century

cription. Jungle clearings often lay fallow for several years. Weeding, like manuring, was also restricted for the most part to crops growing near the home.

Prior to 1913 there was almost no terracing of the hill-slopes, and most of the tilling was done by plows drawn by pairs of oxen (Grigg 1880: 470). Coffee and tea were being grown extensively by the British at that time, but the chief Badaga crops were barley, samai and korali (the latter two being millets). No figures are readily available for the total area of land under crop by Badagas in those days: it was reportedly little below the present amount. In the case of the administrative "village" of Sholur, nevertheless, some data are available and we can make a realistic comparison. This village is typical of Badaga settlements and has hardly changed its official boundaries since the land settlement of 1884:

| | |
|---|---|
| Total village area, 1884: | 22,520 acs. |
| Total village area, 1962: | 22,912 acs. |
| Registered patta lands, 1884: | 2,257 acs., all held by Badagas |
| Estimate of patta lands, 1962: | 4,000 acs., nearly all held by Badagas |
| Number of pattas, 1884: | 49 single ones, 63 joint registrations (i.e. total of 112 pattas) |
| Number of pattas, 1962: | 372 total |
| Population, 1881: | 1772 total |
| Population, 1951: | 5278 total (more recent figures not available) |
| Estimate of crop acreage, 1880-81: | 1850 acs. |
| Estimate of crop acreage, 1962: | 1500 acs. |

(Sources -- McIver & Stokes 1883; Benson 1884; Arputhanathan 1953: 43; Subrahmanyam 1962: 3-4.)

From this comparison evidence of several important changes emerges:

a) in 70 years the population has tripled;

b) in 80 years the number of registered land holdings (pattas) has more than tripled;

c) in 80 years the acreage of patta land has doubled (through release of

AW50 Badaga AW50
Irula AW53
Kota AW55
Kurumba AW56
Toda AW60



dropping 3,080 feet in altitude to a powerhouse in the Mysore Ditch, together with a dammed reservoir and powerhouse in the Moyar River valley, are the main features of the last-mentioned scheme (Nambiar 1965: 26-27).

The five ethnic groups. In 1871, when the first controlled census was taken, the Badagas, Irulas, Kotas, Kurumbas, and Todas formed about two-fifths of the population in the Nilgiri District (Hunter 1886, 10: 308). By 1961, however, the immigration of other people had lowered this fraction to about one-sixth (Nambiar 1965: 8, 10, 254). In the 1871-1961 period the following population changes took place among the five ethnic groups (Grigg et al. 1880: 30; Nambiar 1965: 8, 254):

Badagas: from over 15,000 to over 60,000 (estimated)[1]
Irulas: from 1,470 to 4,502
Kotas: from 1,112 to 832
Kurumbas: from 613 to 1,174
Todas: from 693 to 706

The decrease in the number of Kotas is partially attributable to a smallpox epidemic.

The racially Caucasoid Badagas speak Badagu, worship Lord Shiva, and form an agricultural Hindu caste; most of them dwell above 6,000 feet on the Nilgiri massif, but there are some who inhabit the Wynaad Plateau (Figure 2).[2] Caucasic-Australoid Irulas of the Nilgiri District speak a Tamil dialect, are devotees of Ranga, and form a partly Hinduized agricultural caste; they inhabit eastern Nilgiri slopes. The Irulas of Coimbatore District and Kerala State, who apparently are descended from the same ancestral stock as the Nilgiri District Irulas, are not covered in this study.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 ]

6: Noble K-4,5 (1962-1963) 1989
(1800-1963)

AW50 Badaga AW50
Kota AW55
Kurumba AW56
Toda AW60
Madras Tribes AW63
Kasuva



NOTES

161 [1]The word Badaga, which means Northerner, is generally applied to six castes forming a Saivite caste complex which is associated with past migrations of people from Mysore. The Adiakari, Badaga, Harvar, Kannikar, Lingayat, and Thoraiya caste members speak Badagu and are so classified in each census. It is thus impossible to know the exact number of people in each caste. As only the members of the largest caste, the Badaga caste, are referred to in this study, their numbers must be estimated.

121 144 [2]Following the classificatory system established by Garn, the writer considers each Nilgiri ethnic group as a micro-race (Garn 1961: 13, 122, 129). The micro-races persist because of 1) immigration of a group's ancestors within a period apart from each period in which ancestors of another group arrived and 2) persisting cultural barriers. However, due to limited gene-crossing, it must be remembered that each group has members who racially blend with members of the other groups. Using Coon's recent classification of world races, an attempt is made to broadly classify members of the five ethnic groups by arranging them in a spectrum ranging from the Caucasoid Badagas to the Caucasic-Australoid Kurumbas (Coon 1965: 194-196, 198-201).

000 [3]Languages are labeled according to Emeneau's classification of South Dravidian languages (Emeneau 1964: 1-13).

B: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1982 AN50 Badaga AN50



(amongst others) either his FZD or his MBD, but there is a marked preference for a FZD and some good reasons for it.[3] One involves a feeling of status congruence. Men, it is believed, demean themselves somewhat by becoming bride-givers. This is acknowledged nowadays by the payment of dowry, a new custom among the Badagas. But a young man's spiritual guide is not the family priest in this community; instead it is always his MB, whom he calls *guru* and also accords much respect. It is thus incongruent if that particular man should give his daughter in marriage to the very boy he has counselled. Marriage with a FZD, or with the daughter of a MB other than one's *guru*, gets around this emotional problem.

Patrilocality is another preference that is usually spoken of as an unbending rule. Yet there is in point of fact a term, *aliya se:tu*, for the live-in son-in-law, a young man who opts to live with his wife's family after their marriage. This is considered an undignified and pitiful thing to do, but it can bring real material advantages to a man whose wife has no brothers, and is a necessary alternative to virilocal residence in such a family. The epic ballad *Ba:la Sevana* deals with a man who moves into his father-in-law's village to help with the buffaloes, leaving his own mother in her village lamenting the loss of her only son, and bemoaning her fate since "there will be nobody to set fire to her corpse." It is interesting to note that Ba:la Sevana married into the Kunda region, one that used to be so economically distressed that its children were often sold into bondage for a period of years, thereby becoming the household servants of Badagas in other parts of the Nilgiris. The live-in son-in-law was one institution that helped make up for the loss of male children in those bad years, when bondage was the only answer to the threat of starvation in that region.

## 2. Patriliny and Patrilocality

Today the Badagas are successful cash-crop farmers specialising in cabbages, potatoes, and tea; those of the Kunda region are the wealthiest in the District. Until the early part of this century, on the other hand, they were all mainly farmers of millet. This and several other grains, together with dairy produce, provided their subsistence. When one delves further back in their history, to the 17th and 18th centuries when they were already well established on the Nilgiri Hills but with a population of under 2,000, one finds that the Badagas were already millet farmers yet thought of themselves as primarily buffalo herdsmen. This is reflected very clearly in a number of their epic ballads dating from that time. Since each family or lineage used once to have its own herd of buffaloes, then it is legitimate for us to consider

---

[3] Letters placed in single apostrophes, 'A', 'B', 'C', etc.; stand for hypothetical people and are like personal names. Letters placed in double quotation marks, e.g. "M," "F," etc., indicate classificatory rather than actual kin relationships, and should be read as "in the category of mothers," and so on. Z = sister, S = son, etc.